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# How to Project Power

## What Do They Know That You Don't?



Does it ever frustrate you that politicians don't think rationally? Well, it shouldn't. They might know something you don't. Recently, at a local college here in South Florida, I gave a presentation called "How to Speak the Language of Power: Hacking into Your Lizard Brain." The premise was simple. The language of critical thinking, which all colleges and universities teach, is not enough. There's another "secret" language that powerful people speak. The secret was that if students and faculty really want to make an impact in the world around them, they must not

only learn the language of critical thinking. Most importantly, they must learn methods for projecting power.

Neuroscience shows us that the brains of people around you spend more effort tuning into your body and your tone of voice than in sorting through the logic of your argument. And yet you — especially if you are a nerd like me — will exert a great deal of energy fine-tuning your words in order to influence them. This seldom works, of course, because when you focus exclusively on logic, you are not utilizing the full spectrum of animal communication that is open to you. Because humans are primates, our communication involves more than just words and reason. It is filled to the brim with subtle, non-verbal cues, and the words you are using comprise only a sliver of your overall message.

This is something that I failed to understand for about half my life. Sure, I was aware that people were judging me by my body language, eye contact, tone of voice, and so on, but I tended to dismiss them as irrational and simple-minded. I was essentially ignoring the deeper world of non-verbal communication, and I was repressing my natural ability to project power.

When I began studying in the ancient mystery traditions, this weakness began to disappear. I realized that people are more than just rational or irrational. People are magical. They believe in magic, and they think magically. The average, consensus-reality adult would not dare admit this to her peers, of course. Her magical thinking isn't something she wears with pride. It's something she's ashamed of. It's a "primitive" level of brain function that civilization defeated long ago, right? Well, what I have found is that magic is very much alive and well. We still live in a magical world whether or not we believe ourselves to be magicians.

What do I mean by this? The famous mythologist, Joseph Campbell, once went bowling with some scientists. These well-respected academics served on many committees and had their names in many well-respected journals. They didn't really believe in some of the spooky, otherworldly stuff Campbell had discovered in his research on shamanism, magic, and ancient myth. Campbell observed his die-hard-materialist friends and found their bowling style amusing. After releasing the ball down the lane, they would contort their bodies. They would teeter awkwardly, straining their muscles against thin air, almost losing their balance as they watched the ball hurtled toward the pins. "Just a

little to the left...!" "Just a smidge to the right!" Despite their highly civilized minds, it seemed that their bodies were still practicing magic. As though they could use magical gestures to exert a telekinetic influence on the ball.

If you're an ordinary mortal like me, you will probably find that your fellow human beings respond to your body language much more readily than bowling balls do. Your mind may not be strong enough to bend spoons, but you may sometimes find that bending people to your will is another manner entirely.

Civilized people, especially when they are in denial of magic, are easily manipulated by it. Simple changes in your voice, posture, and eye-contact will change how they think and feel about you. They become charmed by the energy of your posture. They are magnetized by the metaphors in your hand gestures. They are hypnotized by the subtle motion of your eyebrows, and they allow themselves to become entranced by the rising and falling music in your voice. These subtle cues summon them, abjure them, and conjure them to agree with you, regardless of the actual words you are using. When you speak, they are compelled a little bit by your argument and *a lot* by deep biological forces that verge beyond ordinary human understanding. This is especially true for people who are "rational." People who pretend that such hidden forces do not exist.

In the depths of the body — from the depths of our evolutionary past — a billion years of accumulated cellular knowledge lives and breathes within you. Our species comes with the software of millions of "past lives" pre-installed, and this vast amount of ancestral memory is mostly subconscious. For example, the lowered pitch of your voice and the flaring of your nostrils might signal to your children that you are feeling threatened. Your kids may never have seen such a display from you before, but their million-year-old instincts will still recognize these signals and scream "Danger!" No body-language dictionary required.

When I began studying and practicing Hermeticism, this primal, instinctive, and *aesthetic* dimension of existence opened up for me again. An entire worldview was re-awakened, one that has always been there but one that civilization has denied and suppressed. Modern humans pretend to be entirely civilized — and all the while, the "old gods" of our earlier stages of evolution run riot through our nervous system. These ancient powers still possess us and rule our behavior from behind the scenes. Like it or not.

I'm grateful to my mentors for helping me explore these deeper mysteries. For helping me rediscover a primal, symbolic level of existence. The insights gained amount to more than just biology, of course: Profound glimpses into the mysteries of life, death, and sex. The ability to fully activate the nervous system, producing flashes of enlightenment. A heightened awareness of the subtext — that is, the secret language — that arises in art, music, and literature. These finer things are not abstractions. They move in your blood, and they tell your genes how to build your body. Enlightenment is hardwired into your physiology.

Not only am I grateful for these deeper mysteries, but I'm also indebted to my mentors for the surface-level tricks they taught. You see, your ability to project power — personal magnetism, charm, charisma, influence, etc. — is easy to develop. Powerful people have a simple, superficial skill set. Anyone can learn it.

The skills of this non-verbal power language are fun, easy, and surprisingly effective. They operate on the level of smoke and mirrors. They allow you to “fake” the appearance of power. Professional actors are highly aware of these tricks: body language, shifts in tone of voice, restrained eye contact, and most importantly, the power that imagination has over all of these subtle cues.

The spooky thing about these tricks is that — while they appear fake on the surface — they become something else entirely when you put them into practice. You may find that they give you a sense of personal power that eventually becomes authentic. As the saying goes, “Fake it till you make it.”

If you're familiar with the philosophy of method acting, you'll know that an actor's intensive use of imagination is of primary importance to a powerful theatrical performance. The actor isn't really acting at all, but *imagining* himself into an emotional state that is quite genuine. There is a dimension of make-believe in us that touches upon something very real. The power of method acting comes from the fact that the images you conjure up in your mind can awaken deep realities about human nature that are hardwired into your physiology from millions of years of evolution. Imaginary scenarios can call up very real transformative energies. These energies transform both the actor *and* the audience. They gradually rewire your brain, as well as the brains of those around you. When you experience these energies regularly, they

not only change you for a few moments. They change you permanently! This kind of change is what shamans refer to as initiation.

*“...for by names and images are all powers awakened and reawakened.”*

— spoken by the chief adept in a Golden Dawn initiation rite

## How to Become an Alpha

Many people think of the “alpha male” as a monstrous stereotype. As the overbearing, red-faced boss who constantly threatens and stresses out his employees. Or he is the bully. The thug. This is not really a true leader. Rather it is the opposite: the pretender. Someone who is trying unsuccessfully to be the alpha. These recklessly aggressive types are usually the insecure beta and omega males.

So then, what's the difference between a pretender and a true alpha male? Whereas betas and omegas rely on the stress response to carry them through tough times, alphas do the opposite. They remain calm. And they inspire others to remain calm too. In fact, alpha males (and alpha females) typically have lower levels of cortisol (a stress hormone) and higher levels of testosterone. Cortisol and testosterone are antagonists. That is, high levels of cortisol result in low levels of testosterone. This is another way of saying that when you allow yourself to become stressed out, you are not only weakening the physical muscle-building power of testosterone, but you are also diminishing your personal magnetism.

Very often when something becomes hated by the established authority, it is secretly in demand. Testosterone is one of those hated things. It is a much maligned hormone, especially among militant feminists. Simply because testosterone is associated with men (men have much higher levels of testosterone than women), it gets associated with aggression, war, and arrogance — all of which are stereotypical male vices. I would suggest that you forget about these fearful generalizations and start cultivating your levels of testosterone diligently. This supposedly “male” hormone is actually your best friend when it comes to feeling relaxed, confident, and self-assured. Testosterone is especially important in a modern lifestyle, in which the stress response is seldom necessary and the cool resilience of a leader is highly prized.

But where does this leave women? They don't have testicles, so does that mean they are less relaxed, confident, and self-assured? Testosterone is also produced by the ovaries

and the adrenal glands. And women are far more sensitive to testosterone, psychologically, than men are. Their bodies will seldom grow large, muscular, and hairy, but they can still gain all the benefits in personal power and confidence. As is evident in bonobo chimpanzees, our closest genetic relatives among the primates, females also become alphas. They too can lower their stress hormones and elevate their testosterone—essentially turning themselves into powerful, self-assured troop leaders.

Because testosterone is essentially the opposite of a stress hormone, true alphas have the ability to remain calm in a crisis. To such leader types, strength is rarely conveyed through anger, but rather through confidence. Stress is not the primary driver of their behavior. The level gaze of a true alpha male will have you believing that he can defeat you without so much as breaking a sweat. Or better yet, the confident tone of the alpha-female voice will have you believing that submitting to her and joining her troop is your best option.

Okay then. How can we use method acting to become the alpha? How can we project a spirit of stress-free confidence? Do simple acting tricks affect our hormones and transform us into alphas? As a matter of fact, they do. There are three basic magic tricks to learn: power-posing, the illusion of size, and the voice:

Linda Carter as Wonder Woman (1977)

**1. Power-posing:** When you are about to engage in a serious task that will require your confidence, try this. Put one foot up on a chair and imagine you have just slain an evil monster. Your foot rests on the beast's skull. Raise your arms over your head. Cheer or give a primal growl of victory. Hear the cheers of your fellow hunters around you. Poses like this have been proven to increase testosterone by as much as 20 percent, and they decrease cortisol by up to 25 percent. This hormonal shift subsequently reduces your fear, increases your confidence, and boosts your overall sense of well-being — not to mention shifts all of your other body language into power mode. As an awareness technique, do this three times in the morning: Once upon waking, once after you have put on your clothes (your warrior's armor!), and once just before you walk out the door to take on the world.

**2. Size matters!** Show some balls by letting your body fill up the space around you. Stick your chest out slightly. Keep your hands out to your sides. Fill up the chair you're sitting in, and the hallway you're walking in. This tells your hormones, and everyone around you, that you matter. It tells *you* that you matter. Make sure you allow yourself to take up space in both horizontal and vertical dimensions:

- **Horizontality:** When you sit at a meeting, spread your things out, put your hands out to your sides. Imagine yourself as the protector of everyone present. They are safe as long as you are here. Stick your chest out a little bit, and keep your shoulders back. When you walk, allow yourself a slight swagger. For men, this involves allowing the shoulders to drift slightly to the left and right — indicating that you are not afraid to dominate the sidewalk. For women this side-to-side motion involves the hips. Do not overdo these things, of course. Unless you learn to be subtle, people will instinctively recognize a pretender when they see one.
- **Verticality:** This is why parents tell you to sit up straight. This is also why a judge sits on a dais in a courtroom. Literally being tall is a big help, but simply acting as though you are tall is also effective. Your eye gaze is especially important. When you meet someone, do not lower your gaze unless you wish to demonstrate your submission to their authority. Keep your eyes up as though you own the space around you all the way to the horizon. And for heavens sake, stop walking around hunched over the display of your smartphone. Nothing depresses testosterone more than symbolically bowing down before an endless stream of advertisements and cortisol-inducing news stories. Lastly, be careful with handshakes. Avoid

gaining “the upper hand.” Placing your hand on top of theirs can indicate that you are trying to appear “above” them. That is something a fake alpha does.

- **Centrality:** If you are not a large person, you can use your physical location to appear larger. Walk down the center of the hallway. When you enter a room, head for the center and level a warm gaze at people around you. When you sit at a table, do not sit near a corner. Sit as close to the center as possible. Imagine that you are at the center of a wide circle of protection. A circular aura that protects and calms everyone around you, including yourself. When you speak, avoid leaning to the left or right side of your chair. That may signal that you are uncomfortable where you are. Above all, behave as though you are comfortable in the center of your own skin, as well as in a position of taking up plenty of space in the center of the action.

Angela Merkel (Photo from \*USA Today\*)

1. **The voice:** This is one area in which men have a distinct advantage. Millions of years of being dominated by male tribal chieftains has programmed us to respond with respect to a deep voice. The power of the male voice is particularly irresistible when it is resonant. But even if you don't have a deep voice, you can still use a downward inflection at the end of your statements. When you allow the pitch of your voice to rise at the end of a sentence, you express doubt. You fail to inspire confidence. You can practice a downward inflection by saying your name out loud, as though introducing yourself. Make sure the pitch of your voice descends sharply on the last syllable. Think of how James Bond introduces himself: “My name is Bond. James Bond.” The power comes not from the peculiar last-name-first delivery but from the deepening of his voice at the end. You may even also want to try this when you ask questions. The voice often rises at the end of a question, but you don't have to follow this convention. You might try lowering the pitch instead, to notice the powerful effect it has. Your question becomes more “pointed.” More forceful. Imagine yourself turning to a new acquaintance and asking: “Will you be joining us?” First try this with the upward inflection at the end. And then with the downward inflection. Note the difference.

Daniel Craig as James Bond (2006)

## How to Increase Your “Rock Star” Presence

There is more to power than the reassuring confidence of the alpha. Self-doubt and humility can also be magnetic personality traits, so there are some more tricks to learn. There's another quality of charisma that you can add to your skill set. The charisma of stage presence.

The quality of presence is virtually impossible to fake, so don't even bother trying. It is instead helpful to practice mindfulness. Use your imagination. Imagination is not always something that compels us to escape from our present situation (as I all too often do when driving!). It also provides a means of filling up your body with invisible radiance. To project presence, simply use your imagination to bring your mind into the present. Into your body. Here are two helpful methods:

1. **Focus on your feet:** The next time you're driving, observe the other drivers around you. Note their vacant expressions. The daydream stare of the average person behind the wheel will provide you with a model of how *not* to project presence. The imaginal escape route out of your present circumstances is usually up and out the top of your head. In fact, the body will tense up slightly, as though you are squeezing the fluid of your mind stuff upward and out into the clouds. From there it can descend into some other imagined scenario, such as a lounge chair on the beach or the argument you had with your girlfriend this morning. While your mind is wandering in the clouds, your habits take care of your basic survival needs, and people around you can see this. They can see the upward squeeze of your body, and they may even conclude that you are “uptight.” To reverse this escapism, simply reverse the flow. Bring your awareness back from the cloud realms, back into your body. This is especially effective when you focus on your feet. Ritualistically, it tells your mind to be fully present, not only in possession of your brain and heart but in command of your entire body. Try doing this all throughout the day, such that you develop the habit of being fully conscious of the soles of your feet and your toes. You may be surprised at the extraordinary effect it has on people around you, especially when you combine it with the vertical, horizontal, and central qualities of the alpha.

**2. Pause thoughtfully:** It is helpful to deliberately signal to others that you are present. One of the most powerful ways of doing this is to pause. When someone has finished speaking, wait two seconds before answering. Note the effect. It says “I am listening to you *now*, not just waiting for my future opportunity to say something.”

## How to Emanate Warmth and Compassion

The third type of charisma is warmth. This brand of power takes advantage of the mammalian brain, and not surprisingly mammals are warm-blooded. Warmth charisma has everything to do with feeling that kind of warmth. Firm handshakes, big hugs, and beaming smiles. The best way to produce an overall emanation of warmth is to use the imagination. Visualizing other people in a particular way will make all of your subtle behaviors fall in line with that vision.

The most important thing about this kind of charisma is that it's not about you. Your visualization is not about beefing up yourself but about seeing the best in others.

\*Christ\* by Heinrich Hoffman

- 1. The halo exercise:** As you go about your business for the day, imagine everyone around you has a halo of angelic light around their heads. Friendly golden rays emanate from their heads to everyone else around them, offering friendship and comfort. Do this everywhere. In the car. In the grocery store. The more mundane the location, the better. Note results.
- 2. Re-imagining enemies:** When you are about to have a conversation with someone who troubles you, take a break first and imagine three things about them that you admire. The benefits of doing this should be obvious. Note the result it has on your meeting.

These exercises serve as gateways toward yet more skills that you awaken and develop on your own. You might even consider them to be gateway drugs, so powerful are they in producing positive results, and so addictive because of that. In order to learn them and integrate them into your behavior, it's best to devote a week focusing exclusively on just one of these practices. When the week is over, forget about it and move to the next exercise. Just allow these skills to sink in as habits so that they are automatic. Only that way do they begin to become authentic for you. Second nature. You won't have to fake it anymore.

In the next article, I will disclose three disciplines that are more challenging but which also transform you on a deeper level, going directly after that power within you without recourse to superficial acting tricks.

Stay tuned!

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